



# An Introduction to Rhetoric





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## Using the Available Means

\*Rhetoric (as defined by Aristotle) is "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion."

It is a thoughtful, reflective activity leading to effective communication, including the rational exchange of opposing viewpoints.

What does this mean for me?

In Aristotle's day and in ours, those who understand and can use the available means to appeal to an audience of one or many may find themselves in a position of strength. They have the tools to resolve conflicts without confrontation, to persuade readers or listeners to support their position, or to move others to take action.

We need to be able to "read" between the lines.

Consider documentary films: every decision—such as what lighting to use for an interview, what music to play, what to show, and what to leave out—constitutes a rhetorical choice based on what the filmmaker thinks will be most persuasive.

### Uses for Rhetoric

You might use rhetoric to:

- Convince a friend that 2 Chainz should be taken seriously as a legitimate artist.
- Explain to readers of your blog why "The Walking Dead" is the best program on television today.
- Persuade your parents to buy you a new set of wheels.

Rhetoric is not just about speeches.

\*Every essay, political cartoon, photograph, and advertisement is designed to convince you of something.

We call all these mediums "texts" because they are cultural products that can be "read," meaning not just consumed and comprehended, but investigated.

It is our job as informed citizens and consumers to understand how rhetoric works so that we can be wary of manipulation and deceit, while appreciating effect and civil communication.

### TIME OUT

In what other ways will having an understanding of the ways an author/speaker uses rhetoric to appeal to an audience help you?



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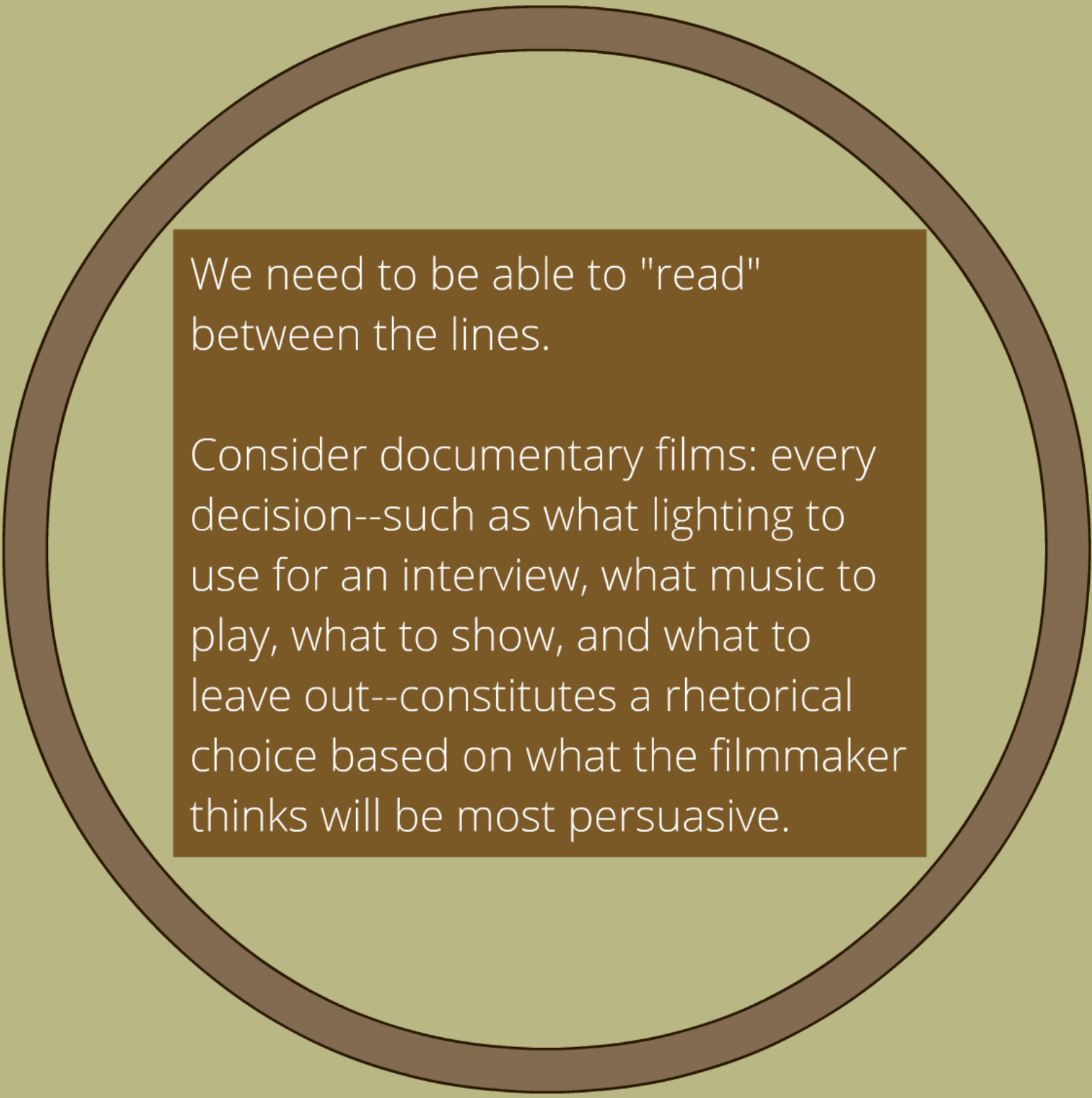


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# Lou Gehrig's 1939 Farewell Speech

What makes this speech so effective?

It has  
place  
spoke  
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# Rhetoric is always occasional

It has an OCCASION (the time and place the text was written or spoken).

The occasion exists within a specific CONTEXT- the circumstances, atmosphere, attitudes, and events surrounding the text.

It has a PURPOSE- the goal the writer wants to achieve.





Let's work it out

What is Gehrig's occasion? Context?  
Purpose?

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# The Rhetorical Triangle

An important aspect of the rhetorical situation is the relationship between speaker, audience, and purpose.

Lou Gehrig's 1939 Farewell Speech

What makes this speech so effective?

Rhetoric is always occasional

It has an OCCASION (the time and place) that sets the occasion for speaking. The occasion motivates a speaker. CONTEXT: the circumstances, attitudes, and moods surrounding the occasion. It has a PURPOSE: the goal the speaker wants to achieve.

Let's work it out

What is Gehrig's occasion? Context? Purpose?

•The SPEAKER

person or group who creates the text. Sometimes there is a slight difference between who the speaker is in real life and the role the speaker plays when delivering the speech. This is called a PERSONA. It means the face or character that a speaker shows to his or her audience.

**Ability to Consider a Rhetorical Situation**  
Contextual and purpose: a rhetorical situation for writing a scene of a novel, video game, or cartoon. Be very specific to your subject: what is your subject? What is your purpose? What is your audience? What is your relationship to the audience?

•The AUDIENCE

the listener, viewer, or reader of a text or performance. There may be multiple audiences.

When making rhetorical decisions, speakers ask what values their audiences hold, particularly whether the audience is hostile, friendly, or neutral and how informed it is on the topic at hand.

•The SUBJECT

the topic. Should not be confused with the purpose, which is the goal the speaker wants to achieve.



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1-Constructing a Rhetorical Situation

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## Activity #1 -Constructing a Rhetorical Situation

Construct and analyze a rhetorical situation for writing a review of a movie, video game, or concert. Be very specific in your analysis: What is your subject? What is your purpose? Who is your audience? What is your relationship to the audience?

## SOAPS

SUBJECT  
OCCASION  
AUDIENCE  
PURPOSE  
SPEAKER

Think of it as a checklist that helps you organize your ideas rhetorically.

### Activity: Using SOAPS to Analyze Texts

In 1936, Albert Einstein wrote this letter to a sixth-grade student, Phyllis Wright, in response to her questions: Do scientists pray? And if so, what do they pray for?

### George W. Bush's 9/11 Speech

Using SOAPS, analyze the rhetorical situation in the following speech.

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Using SOAPS, analyze the rhetorical situation in the following speech.



# Appeals to Ethos, Logos, and Pathos

## Aristotle's Rhetorical Appeals: ethos, logos, and pathos

### Ethos

Greek for "character"  
-speakers use this appeal to demonstrate that they are credible and trustworthy  
-often emphasize shared values between the speaker and the audience

### LOGOS

Greek for "embodied thought"  
-speakers offer clear, rational ideas that have a clear main idea and specific details, examples, facts, statistics, or expert testimony to back it up

This combination of concession and refutation actually strengthens your own argument; it appeals to logos by demonstrating that you understand a viewpoint other than your own, you've thought through other evidence, and you stand by your view.

### Pathos

an appeal to emotions, values, desires, and hopes, on the one hand, or fears and prejudices, on the other

Although an argument that appeals exclusively to the emotions is by definition weak, an effective speaker or writer understands the power of evoking an audience's emotions by using such tools as figurative language, personal anecdotes, and vivid images

### Images and Pathos

ACLU advertisement

### Humor and Pathos

Cockberry Congress by Russ Marini

Rich Irons: Bush Pokes a Hole in Science

### Rhetorical Analysis of Visual Texts

Visual texts are any images or pictures that convey a message. They can be found in many forms, including advertisements, posters, and social media posts. When analyzing a visual text, look for the following elements:

### Combining Ethos, Pathos, and Logos

John Manton's anti-slavery oratorical speech

### "The Checkers Speech"

Richard Nixon

### Slow Food Nation

Alice Waters

### Conceding and Refuting

One way to appeal to logos is to acknowledge a counterargument—that is, to acknowledge objections or opposing views. In acknowledging a counterargument, you agree (concede) that an opposing argument may be true or reasonable, but then you deny (refute) the validity of all or part of the argument.

### Building Ethos

Waters and Waters' speech is a good example of building ethos. They use their own names and the names of their organization, the Slow Food Movement, to establish their credibility. They also use their own experiences and knowledge to support their argument.

They also use the names of other organizations and individuals who support their argument, such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization, to further establish their credibility.

### The King's Speech September 3, 1954

Let's look at a rhetorical analysis of Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

### Establishing Ethos

King's speech is a powerful example of ethos. He establishes his credibility by using his own name and the names of other leaders, such as Abraham Lincoln and Winston Churchill, to support his argument.

# Ethos

- Greek for "character"
- speakers use this appeal to demonstrate that they are credible and trustworthy
- often emphasize shared values between the speaker and the audience

# Establishing Ethos

In some instances, a speaker's reputation immediately establishes ethos. In other cases, a speaker establishes ethos through what he or she says in the text by sounding reasonable, acknowledging other opinions, or being thoughtful and well informed. The speaker's ethos--expertise, knowledge, experience, sincerity, common purpose with the audience, or a combination of these factors--gives the audience a reason for listening to this person on this subject.

# The King's Speech

## September 3, 1939

Let's look at an example of how a speaker's title or status automatically brings ethos to the rhetorical situation.



# Building Ethos

Writers and speakers often have to build their ethos by explaining their credentials or background to their readers, or by emphasizing shared values. You are more likely to listen to someone who is qualified to speak on a subject or who shares your interests and concerns.

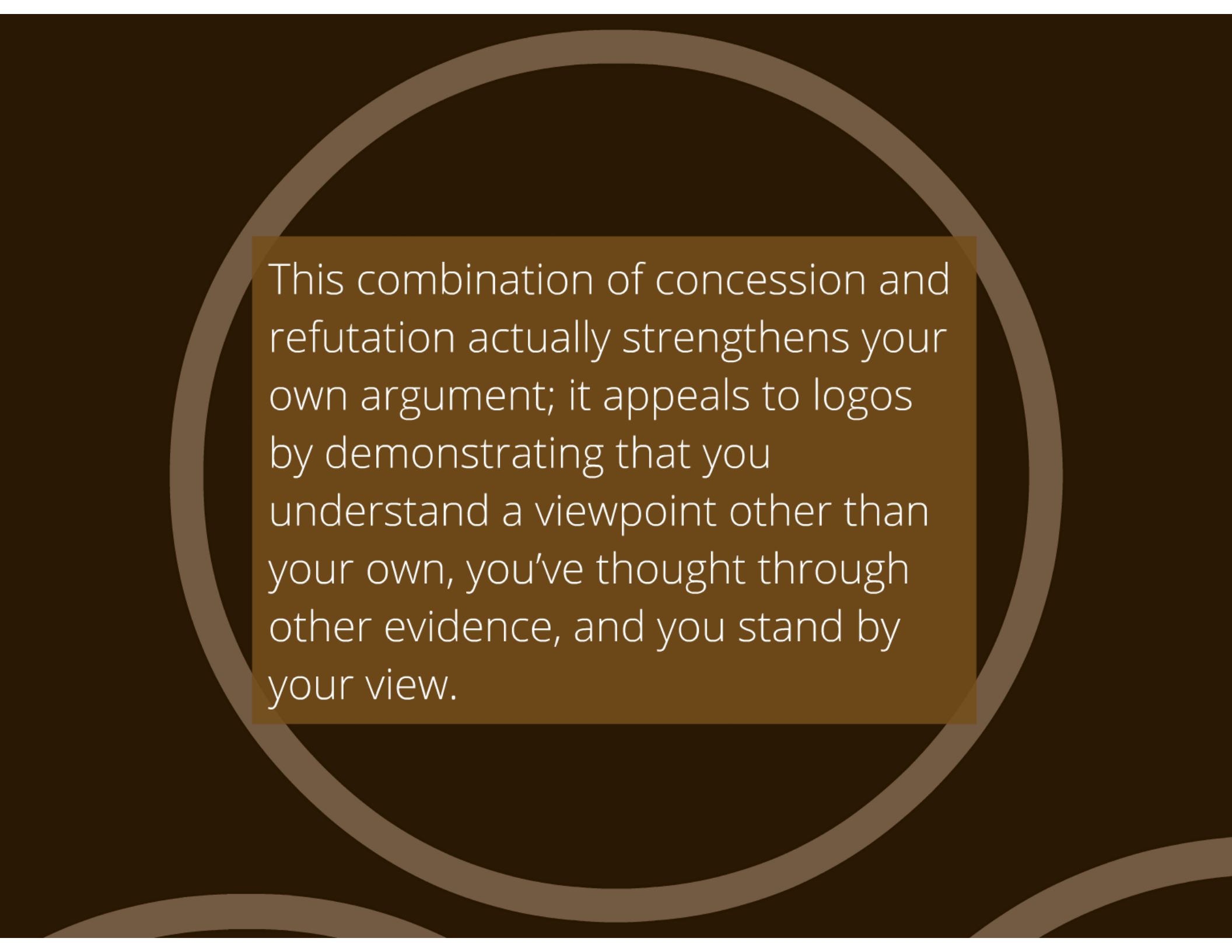
Let's look at the excerpt from Judith Ortiz Cofer's "The Myth of the Latin Woman: I Just Met a Girl Named Maria" as she draws on her own Puerto Rican heritage as she describes her experience with prejudice as a young Latina.

# LOGOS

- Greek for "embodied thought"
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The background is a dark brown color with several concentric circles of a lighter brown shade. A central dark red rectangle contains the text "Slow Food Nation". Below it, a horizontal olive green rectangle contains the text "Alice Waters".

# Slow Food Nation

Alice Waters

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# Images and Pathos

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# Humor and Pathos

Crackberry Congress by Ruth  
Marcus

# Combining Ethos, Pathos, and Logos

Toni Morrison's endorsement of  
Senator Barack Obama



# Rhetorical Analysis of Visual Texts

Many visual texts are full-fledged arguments. They are occasioned by specific circumstances, they have a purpose, and they make a claim and support it with appeals to authority, emotion, and reason.



Tom Toles' Rosa Parks tribute  
cartoon

Analysis of  
texts

# "The Checkers Speech"

Richard Nixon

# Determining Effective and Ineffective Rhetoric

Not every attempt at rhetoric hits its mark.

In the real world, deciding whether rhetoric hits or misses its mark is often a matter of debate.

PETA Advertisement, Essay on Nuclear Reactors





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